

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Seasonable Hints Pertaining to Gardening

*From a Talk Over the Radio
at Station WNAC
by John Kirkegaard.*

With the approach of Spring, nearly everyone feels the awakening within himself of a desire to plant something. It may be a garden patch with vegetables, an old-fashioned flower bed, some pretty deciduous shrubs or dwarf evergreens, some young forest trees for clothing that barren hillside, a few hardy perennials for the back yard, a fruit tree or two especially to please Mother, or a large orchard for profit, but whatever it is, we firmly resolve, that no matter what we plant, we shall do it in a manner to obtain better results than we have ever had before, and some of us look back taking account of our mistakes, and set to work carefully to plan our problems.

One of the most important requisites to success in gardening, is that of planning before planting. I could talk to you for hours about how, what, when and where to plant, but during the short ten minutes allotted me, I will confine myself to naming just a few points which must be observed in order to be successful with the growing of hardy trees and plants. They are living things, and must be given attention as such. They must be fed but not overfed. If nature does not provide sufficient water, we must supply it, especially during the period before the plant becomes re-established after being transplanted.

We are judged as to our pride in our communities or homes by the way our places look. Let us make them attractive. Let

us plan well before we plant. Frequently an irregularly outlined bed from three to four feet wide, and planted against the house with flowering shrubs or dwarf evergreens, will more than any other one thing, take away that bare look. Set the plants about two and one-half or three feet apart, and avoid straight lines. Before planting, dig over the bed to the depth of an ordinary spade, and mix with the soil a small quantity of stable dressing if it is obtainable,—otherwise use some such material as bone meal, tankage, pulverized sheep manure or the like, but use it carefully, as too much of it will burn the roots. Set all plants a little deeper than they have been standing in the ground before, and press the soil down firmly about the roots. When you have finished planting, levelled off the soil and edged the bed properly, apply a liberal amount of water, which will help the plants in becoming re-established. If the season is dry, water occasionally through the summer, but when you water, water well, and continue if possible until the moisture has reached down into the ground to a depth of two feet. Small and frequent applications of water are of little use, therefore water rather once a month, but do it thoroughly.

To locate shade or specimen trees, look out through the living room window, from where Mother sits, and consider the view she gets. If not objectionable, provide the specimen trees with a light mulch of stable dressing, grass or leaves, to hold moisture. Avoid having the roots become dry during the process of planting. Keep them covered and if possible keep them wet while they are out of the ground.

If trees or plants reach you in a frozen condition, just let them thaw out slowly before they are handled. Keep them in a cool place, wet them down and cover them with blankets or straw, and they will not be injured.

Hedge plants such as Privets or Barberries are best if set one foot apart. To make a thick hedge, cut back the plants severely, especially Privets, at once after planting. Set plants of Privets very deeply.

Some fruit trees do not bear because of lack of pollen. Plant therefore an assortment of varieties. Before you cut your new lawn the first time, roll it to press the young roots into the soil. Avoid planting of Willows or Poplars near drain or sewer pipes, as the roots will clog them. Be always ready to do some pruning, but do not prune out of season. You will never make a mistake by pruning a shrub immediately after it goes out of bloom. On the other hand, if you prune before it flowers, you naturally cut off the wood which is to bear flowers. By careful pruning you can govern the growth of your shrubs. You can make them bushy and dense, tall and open, in fact they can be made to serve just the object for which they are wanted, if treated right. Proper pruning requires some thought, but is not difficult to do. Try and do some pruning, and study the results, and you will soon become an expert. Newly planted deciduous shrubs or trees, must invariably be pruned. Remove about one-third of the length of each branch,—no matter how small the branch is, but do it at once after planting. When you plant dormant roses, no matter whether they are climbing or everblooming varieties, set the plants at least four inches deeper

than they have been set before, and cut them down to within three to five buds of the ground. Deep planting and immediate cutting back of the plants is very essential.

When planting Azaleas, Rhododendrons or Mountain Laurels, do not use lime. Rather mix with the soil some leaves or leaf mold, which they delight in, and do not allow the beds to become dry. If possible, apply a mulch to help keep the moisture.

When you plant fruit trees, prune them at once after planting. Remove from apples, pears, plums and quince trees about one-third of each branch. Cherry trees require a more severe pruning, and all branches should be cut off to within about four to five inches of the base or stem. When you plant peach trees, cut off all branches to within a half inch of the stem, and when your tree looks just like a whip, cut off one-third of the same, leaving simply a cane, perhaps three feet high, and without any branches whatever. The reason for this treatment is, that, first, a peach tree when it is planted should not be more than one year old. Second, the first year's branches of a peach tree will never bear fruit of any account. It is therefore proper to remove as soon as possible, the barren branches, and encourage the growth of those which are to produce fruit. Excepting immediately after transplanting, peach, cherry and plum trees should not be pruned,—save perhaps when necessary to remove an entire branch.

When you plant evergreens which have been taken up with a ball of earth, insert the ball in water before you remove the wrapping, and try not to break the ball of earth. If you plant carefully, and if your plants reach you in good condition, you should never lose more than five per cent. When you put fertilizer around an established tree, don't put it around the trunk. Put it under the outer branches, where the young roots can get it. Do not allow wire labels to remain on your trees, as they cut the bark as the branches expand in size. If you notice gum at the base of a peach, plum or cherry tree, it is a sign of borers. Insert a pliable wire into the holes to crush the borers.

When you plant strawberries, mix the varieties, as some are not perfect flowering and cannot fruit if grown alone. To make Phloxes bloom late in the season, pinch back some of the plants. Do not allow the seeds of phlox to ripen on the plants, as they will drop on the ground and germinate, and as very few of seedling phloxes are of attractive colors, your phlox bed will become unsightly by seedlings crowding out the mother plants. In fact, all perennial plants should have the flowers cut off as soon as they fade. If your roses, larkspurs or hollyhocks have mildew, dust or spray them with Bordeaux mixture, and spray at intervals of about two weeks.

About Trailing Arbutus or Mayflowers. Don't attempt to transplant them from their wild state, because it is practically impossible to re-establish them. Rather leave the plants where nature intended that they should grow, and where we all enjoy seeing them. To attempt to transplant wild Mountain Laurels is almost useless. When growing wild, the Laurel develops but a very few roots, and does not take kindly to being transplanted. Better leave the plants where they look pretty and flourish to the delight of us all.

An effective way of fertilizing trees on lawns where one does not wish to disturb the ground, is to drive holes with a crowbar or iron pipe around the tree, and about directly under the outer branches, filling the holes with such material as bone meal, sheep manure or tankage.

Prune your grape vines before the sap begins to flow, and cut back all last year's growth to within three buds. Plant a Mulberry tree for the birds, and when making your selection of ornamental shrubs, don't forget the ones which are attractive in the winter because of their fruits, and which also furnish food for the wild birds. Rake in some grass seed on your lawn early in the spring, and give it a top dressing of bone meal or other similar material. For leaf eating insects, spray with Arsenate of Lead. Birds eat bugs. Protect the birds. To get the best fruit, thin out the sets of apples, pears and peaches. Do your planting of hardy trees and plants as early in the spring as possible, remembering that root action starts as soon as the frost leaves the ground, and plants suffer the least when moved early in the spring and while the ground is moist and the air is cool. If you purchase trees or plants, ascertain their source of origin. Animals can adapt themselves to any climate. Plants cannot. Use plants raised in locations as cold as that of yours.



Reprinted by the New England Nurseries Co., Bedford, Mass.